

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 11-AWASHINGTON TIMES
1 October 1986

Our 'pretty good week'

To judge by appearances alone, which is the way most judgments will be reached, the Reagan administration went back on its word. On Sept. 5 Secretary of State George Shultz, peeved by charges of a cave-in on the Daniloff affair, said testily "there should be no talk of a trade for Nick Daniloff," the American journalist who was traded this week for Soviet spy Gennady Zakharov. On Sept. 8 President Reagan said the same thing.

This week's tit-for-tat exchange, we are expected to believe, was a swap, but not a "trade." Just as the Reykjavik meeting between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev will not be a "summit," which Webster's defines as "a conference of highest-level officials," but only a meeting. And just as arms control will/will not come up. "There is no way of knowing" (Ronald Reagan); "obviously we're going to talk about arms control issues" (George Shultz).

My, my, what a tangled web we weave, and what a mess we make of foreign policy in the process. This is, after all, the same administration that has prided itself on discrediting what Jeane Kirkpatrick, its former U.N. ambassador, correctly derides as the theory of "moral equivalence" — i.e., the notion that, at bottom, the Soviets are no better or worse than we are.

How will this week's deceptions be received by (a) the American public, which,

according to the polls, already suspects that Mr. Daniloff may have been a double dipper, working by day for U.S. News & World Report and by night for the Central Intelligence Agency and (b) the outside world, which finds even our president giving voice to contradictions that, in other mouths, would be dismissed as disinformation? Many a non-cynic will conclude that, when it is in their interest, American officials may be relied upon to lie just as glibly as the most accomplished commissar.

Of course there was a trade. Mr. Daniloff was released and flown home, whereupon the Russians got their spy back, having paid no penalty beyond a plea of "nolo contendere" to espionage charges and the release of two nuisances, dissident Yuri Orlov and wife. (As consolation, Moscow also won some concessions on the threatened expulsion of 25 U.N. spies in New York.)

Even President Reagan, having boasted impetuously on Monday that the Soviets had "blinked," has concluded that he "shouldn't have said that," and he is right. The Soviets, who take espionage seriously, look after their spies. They wanted Zakharov back, and they got him, which prompts from our secretary of state the exultation, "Overall, it's been a pretty good week for us."

One dreads to think what "triumphs" may lie ahead at Reykjavik.